

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer program product tangibly embodied in an information carrier,
the computer program product including instructions that, when executed, prioritize
5 associations of products and business entities in a data collection, the computer program
product configured to:

receive information associating a particular product identified in the data
collection with a particular business entity identified in the data collection, wherein the
particular business entity is associated in the data collection with multiple data entries
10 that each identify one or more product associations with the particular business entity and
each of the multiple data entries has a priority indication associated therewith; and

storing the multiple data entries in the data collection for use in determining, in
response to a received request, which of the multiple data entries associated with the
particular business entity includes a higher priority indication and using a data entry of
15 the multiple data entries that includes the higher priority indication to determine whether
a product identified in the data collection is associated with the particular business entity.

2. The computer program product of claim 1 further configured to receive
multiple priority indications wherein:

20 each of the multiple priority indications is associable with a data entry of the
multiple data entries, and

the multiple priority indications are received before the information associating
the particular product identified in the data collection with the particular business entity
identified in the data collection is received.

25 3. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein:

products identified in the data collection are associated with one of multiple
product categories, and

at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business
30 entity identify at least one of the product associations based on an association of a
product identified in the data collection with one of the multiple product categories.

4. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein:
business entities identified in the data collection are associated with one of
multiple business entity categories, and
at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business
5 entity identify the particular business entity based on an association of the particular
business entity identified in the data collection with one of the multiple product
categories.

5. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein:
10 business entities identified in the data collection are organized into a business
entity hierarchy, and
at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business
entity identify the particular business entity based on an association of the particular
business entity with another business entity in the business entity hierarchy.

15 6. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein:
products identified in the data collection are organized into a product hierarchy,
and
at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business
20 entity identify at least one of the product associations based on an association of the
product with another product in the product hierarchy.

7. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein:
the information received includes a validity period,
25 at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business
entity is stored in the data collection and the at least one of the multiple data entries
includes the validity period for use in determining which of the multiple data entries
includes the higher priority indication and using the data entry of the multiple data entries
that includes the higher priority indication and the validity period.

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8. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity indicates that the particular business entity is permitted to sell a product identified by the one or more product associations.

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9. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity indicates that the particular business entity is not permitted to sell a product identified by the one or more product associations.

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10. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity indicates that the particular business entity is permitted to purchase a product identified by the one or more product associations.

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11. The computer program product of claim 1 wherein at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity indicates that the particular business entity is not permitted to purchase a product identified by the one or more product associations.

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12. A computer-implemented method for prioritizing associations of products and business entities in a data collection, the method comprising:

receiving information associating a particular product identified in the data collection with a particular business entity identified in the data collection, wherein the particular business entity is associated in the data collection with multiple data entries that each identify one or more products associations with the particular business entity and each of the multiple data entries has a priority indication associated therewith; and

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storing the multiple data entries in the data collection for use in determining, in response to a received request, which of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity includes a higher priority indication and using a data entry of

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the multiple data entries that includes the higher priority indication to determine whether a product identified in the data collection is associated with the particular business entity.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising receiving multiple priority
5 indications wherein:

each of the multiple priority indications is associable with a data entry of the multiple data entries, and

the multiple priority indications are received before the information associating the particular product identified in the data collection with the particular business entity
10 identified in the data collection is received.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein:

products identified in the data collection are associated with one of multiple product categories, and

15 at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity identify at least one of the product associations based on an association of a product identified in the data collection with one of the multiple product categories.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein:

20 business entities identified in the data collection are associated with one of multiple business entity categories, and

at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity identify the particular business entity based on an association of the particular business entity identified in the data collection with one of the multiple product
25 categories.

16. The method of claim 12 wherein:

business entities identified in the data collection are organized into a business entity hierarchy, and

at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity identify the particular business entity based on an association of the particular business entity with another business entity in the business entity hierarchy.

5 17. The method of claim 12 wherein:
products identified in the data collection are organized into a product hierarchy,
and

at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business entity identify at least one of the product associations based on an association of the
10 product with another product in the product hierarchy.

18. The method of claim 12 wherein:
the information received includes a validity period,
at least one of the multiple data entries associated with the particular business
15 entity is stored in the data collection and the at least one of the multiple data entries includes the validity period for use in determining which of the multiple data entries includes the higher priority indication and using the data entry of the multiple data entries that includes the higher priority indication and the validity period.

20 19. A system for prioritizing associations of products and business entities in a data collection, the system comprising a processor connected to a storage device and one or more input/output devices, wherein the processor is configured to:

receive information associating a particular product identified in the data collection with a particular business entity identified in the data collection, wherein the
25 particular business entity is associated in the data collection with multiple data entries that each identify one or more products associations with the particular business entity and each of the multiple data entries has a priority indication associated therewith; and

store the multiple data entries in the data collection for use in determining, in response to a received request, which of the multiple data entries associated with the
30 particular business entity includes a higher priority indication and using a data entry of

the multiple data entries that includes the higher priority indication to determine whether a product identified in the data collection is associated with the particular business entity.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the processor is further configured to
5 receive multiple priority indications wherein:

each of the multiple priority indications is associable with a data entry of the multiple data entries, and

the multiple priority indications are received before the information associating the particular product identified in the data collection with the particular business entity
10 identified in the data collection is received.